(d) by when the arrears would be cleared?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SANJAY PASWAN): (a) to (d) The Indian Airlines carries domestic mails for the Department of Posts. Since the Indian Airlines frequently and unilaterally enhanced the rates for carriage of mail, the department referred the matter to the Ministry of Finance, Department of Expenditure for their intervention for fixing a reasonable rate to be paid to Indian Airlines by the Department. Meanwhile, the department continued to make payment to Indian Airlines at a provisional rate on the advice of the Ministry of Finance, Department of Expenditure. The Ministry of Finance, Department of Expenditure finally fixed the rate for payment to Indian Airlines from 1994-95 to 1999-2000 and advised the department in January 2002 to make payment of Rs. 24.90 crores to Indian Airlines. The department accordingly, paid the amount in two instalment of Rs. 20.00 crores and Rs. 4.90 crores in February and March, 2002 respectively. Thereafter the bills are being paid at provisional rate, pending finalisation of rates for the period 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 by Ministry of Finance, Department of Expenditure.

VSNL's Dues on American Companies

†2359. SHRI KAPIL SIBAL:
SHRI RAJIV RANJAN SINGH 'LALAN':

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that an amount of $30 million of VSNL is outstanding against a number of American companies;

(b) if not, the actual amount due till March, 2002;

(c) the names of American companies alongwith the amount due on these companies; and

(d) by when it is likely to be recovered?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN):(a) to (d) Sir, with the sale of 25% of Government's

†Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.

equity in Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited to M/s Panatone Finvest Ltd., a Tata group company, and handing over the management control to the strategic partner, the company has been privatised *w.e.f.* 13.2.2002.

Downward Trend in IT sector

2360. SHRI H.K. JAVARE GOWDA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATIONTECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that IT sector in the country has been slowed down in the year 2002-2003;

b) if so, the steps Government propose to take for achieving the propriety in the sector; and

(c) whether there would be demand for Indian IT professionals across the world in near future, if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICAITONS AND INFORMATIONTECHNOLOGY (DR. SANJAY PASWAN): (a) No, Sir. The IT sector in India is likely to witness a growth of over 26% during the year 2002-03.

(b) Various steps taken by the Government to strengthen the Indian IT industry are given in the enclosed Statement. (*See* below)

(c) The demand for Indian IT professionals across the world continues to exist.The situation is further likely to improve in the days to come. It is estimated that in USA there would be a demand of 100,000 IT professional by the year 2005.

Statement

Steps taken by the Government to promote the Information Technology Sector

1. Export Promotion Capital Goods scheme (EPCG) has been rationalised and extended uniformly to all sectors without any threshold limit on payment of 5% duty.
2. Approvals for all foreign direct investment proposals relating to the Information Technology sector, with the exception of Business-to-consumer (B2C) e-commerce are under the automatic route.